

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 5425

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR EG UR SU ET SO CU
SUBJ: GOE VIEWS ON HORN OF AFRICA

1. DURING MEETING WITH EMBOFFS MARCH 30, EGYPTIAN MFA AFRICAN DEPARTMENT CHIEF AHMAD SIDQI MADE FOLLOWING POINTS CONCERNING DEVELOPMENTS IN HORN:

2. TA'IZ SUMMIT AND RED SEA SECURITY. AMBASSADOR SIDQI NOTED THAT GOE HAD HAD VIRTUALLY NO ROLE IN PREPARATIONS FOR TA'IZ QUADRIPARTITE SUMMIT. IN FACT, COORDINATION BETWEEN ARAB RED SEA LITTORAL STATES RECENTLY HAS BEEN LAMENTABLY POOR AND NO PERMANENT MECHANISMS EXIST TO COORDINATE STRATEGY. IN GOE
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VIEW, MEDIA EVENTS SUCH AS TA'IZ SUMMIT, WHICH PRODUCE LITTLE OF OF SUBSTANCE, NOT MOST PRODUCTIVE WAY OF REDUCING SOVIET INFLUENCE IN RED SEA, AS SOVIETS SIMPLY ALERTED THAT MODERATE ARABS NOW SCHEMING AGAINST SOVIET INFLUENCE IN HORN. SUDANESE, WHO RESPONSIBLE FOR TA'IZ INITIATIVE, SHOW A CERTAIN NAIVETE IN THINKING THAT SUCH SYMBOLIC EVENTS AS SIAD BARRE'S PRESENCE IN TA'IZ DO MUCH TO ALTER BALANCE OF POWER IN AREA. SAUDIS AND

EGYPTIANS BELIEVE BEHIND-THE-SCENES BILATERAL DEALINGS WITH PDRY AND SOMALIA PREFERABLE. GOE CONSIDERS THAT SIAD HAS BEEN PLACED IN DIFFICULT POSITION VIS-A-VIS SOVIETS SINCE NO TANGIBLE GAINS APPARENTLY DERIVED FROM MINI-SUMMIT.

3. FUTURE RED SEA MOVES. CURRENT VISIT OF SUDANESE FONMIN MANSUR KHALID TO CAIRO ESSENTIALLY TO EXPLAIN RESULTS OF TA'IZ CONFERENCE AND TO OUTLINE PLANS FOR FULL RED SEA SECURITY CONFERENCE, PERHAPS IN MAY. EGYPTIANS USING KHALIK VISIT TO STRESS TO SUDANESE GOE PREFERENCE FOR MORE SUBTLE RED SEA APPROACH. SIDQI NOTED, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT GOE HAS NOT EVEN DECIDED YET WHETHER TO ATTEND ENLARGED RED SEA CONFERENCE. KHALID HAS EXPLAINED TO EGYPTIANS GOE DESIRE TO BREAK RED SEA ISSUE INTO TWO SPHERES: ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL. ECONOMIC SPHERE NATURALLY WOULD INVOLVE MATTERS RELATING TO SAUDI FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND WOULD LEAVE SUMMIT FREE TO DISCUSS SECURITY (I.E. ANTI-SOVIET) ISSUES AND PRESENCE OF ISRAELIS IN ETHIOPIA.

4. SOVIET STRATEGY IN ETHIOPIA. GOE BELIEVES THAT MOSCOW FULLY COMMITTED TO INSURE MENGISTU'S SURVIVAL AND CURRENT SOVIET AIM TO CONSOLIDATE MENGISTU'S HOLD ON POWER DURING NEXT FOUR-FIVE MONTHS. "IF MENGISTU LASTS FOR FIVE MORE MONTHS", COMMENTED SIDQI, "MOSCOW WILL HAVE WON THE FIRST ROUND IN ETHIOPIA." GOE DOES NOT FEEL THAT MENGISTU HAS A CHANCE TO SURVIVE WITHOUT SOVIET SUPPORT AND GOE EXPECTS LARGE-SCALE CUBAN AID TO PROP UP REGIME. IN GOE VIEW, COMING MONTHS WILL BE EXTREMELY CRITICAL IN ETHIOPIA AND SOVIETS WILL BE IN EXCELLENT POSITION IF THEIR GAMBLE PAYS OFF.

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5. GOE AND ERITREA. GOE POLICY REGARDING ERITREAN REBELLION RATHER FLUID AT PRESENT. EGYPTIANS BELIEVE THAT 1952 UNGA RESOLUTION CALLING FOR ERITREAN-ETHIOPIAN FEDERATION REPRESENTS MINIMUM ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION SHORT OF ERITREAN INDEPENDENCE STILL COULD "BE WORKED OUT" BUT NOT BY MENGISTU REGIME. GOE POLICY ON ERITREAN INDEPENDENCE OVER COMING MONTHS WILL BE DEFINED BY DEVELOPMENTS IN ETHIOPIA (I.E. EXTENT OF SOVIET GAINS).

6. CUBAN MEDIATION EFFORTS. EGYPTIANS HAVE RECEIVED REPORTS THAT CASTRO INDEED ATTEMPTED TO MEDIATE BETWEEN SIAD AND MENGISTU, BUT EFFORTS APPARENTLY UNSUCCESSFUL "FOR THE MOMENT". GOE BELIEVES THAT CASTRO, AFTER HIS TALKS WITH MENGISTU, HAD SECOND MEETING WITH SIAD ON MARCH 17 "SOMEWHERE IN SOMALIA". SIDQI WARNED THAT BLOC OF "PROGRESSIVE", PRO SOVIET STATES STILL VERY REAL POSSIBILITY IN HORN AREA, DESPITE APPARENT CASTRO SETBACK. ATTENDANCE OF SIAD AND SALIM RUBAYYI' ALI IN TA'IZ SHOULD NOT LULL USG INTO THINKING THAT SOVIETS ON THE RUN.

7. SOMALIA AND EGYPTIAN/SUDANESE/SYRIAN BLOC. DURING MARCH 7-9 AFRO-ARAB SUMMIT, SIAD TALKED TO EGYPTIANS ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF SOMALIA JOINING UNIFIED EGYPTIAN-SYRIAN-SUDANESE POLITICAL COMMAND. GOE HAD IMPRESSION THAT (A) SOMALIA WOULD NOT MOVE AWAY FROM SOVIET ORBIT UNLESS THERE VIABLE MILITARY/ECONOMIC ALTERNATIVE WHICH DOES NOT EXIST AND (B) SIAD NOT CURRENTLY IN POSITION TO MAKE ANY SUCH BASIC DECISIONS ON SOMALIA'S COURSE BY HIMSELF; THERE ARE OTHERS IN MOGADISCIO WHO WOULD HAVE TO APPROVE AND WHO, GOE BELIEVES, WOULD BE HARD TO CONVINCE.

8. COMMENT: AMBASSADOR SIDQI'S RATHER DISPARAGING COMMENTS CONCERNING LACK OF INTER-ARAB COORDINATION OR ACCOMPLISHMENTS ON RED SEA MATTERS STAND IN SHARP CONTRAST TO SEEMING SUDANESE SATISFACTION OVER TA'IZ RESULTS. GOE SEES SOVIETS AND THEIR CUBAN SURROGATES ON MOVE THROUGHOUT AFRICA AND IS DISTURBED BY WHAT IT REGARDS AS US PASSIVITY AND BY ARAB INABILITY TO TAKE CONCERTED ACTION AGAINST SOVIET THREAT.
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EGYPTIANS REGARD TA'IZ CONFERENCE AS WINDOW DRESSING WHICH DOES NOT BEGIN TO TACKLE BASIC PROBLEMS RAISED BY SOVIET "BRUTAL OFFENSIVE." SIDQI APPEARED TO REGARD TA'IZ CONFERENCE AS SUDANESE-INSPIRED DECLARATION OF WAR AGAINST SOVIETS--A WAR MODERATE ARABS NOT YET READY TO FIGHT.

9. IT POSSIBLE THAT ARAB STRATEGY IN HORN BEING HANDLED ON CHIEFS OF STATE/FORMIN LEVEL AND SIDQI NOT AWARE OF POSSIBLE COORDINATION. HOWEVER, WE DOUBT IT SINCE SIDQI IS LEADING AFRICAN SPECIALIST IN MFA AND HE NOTED THAT HE HAS PARTICIPATED IN RECENT GOE TALKS WITH SIAD AND MANSUR KHALID.
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